Social and economic aspects in the Old Testament

Graafland, J.J.

Published in:
Economologues. Liber Amicorum voor Theo van de Klundert

Publication date:
2001

11 Social and Economic Aspects in the Old Testament

Johan J. Graafland*

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Recently, there is an increasing interest in the role of values in the economy (Bovenberg and Van de Klundert, 1999). The institutional economics approach stresses that values like reliability, integrity and fairness foster economic growth by reducing transaction costs. In this respect there is an important role for moral-cultural institutions including churches and family life.

This paper tries to meet the increasing interest in values by studying economic values in the Old Testament. The bible is the central and common source of the Jewish-Christian tradition, in which the Western culture is rooted. Common western values often find their origin in biblical texts. However, there are also tensions between various biblical traditions, which still persist in the contemporary economic theological debate. The bible is a collection of books, written during a long period of time. This especially holds for the Old Testament, of which the oldest parts are dated at 1100 BC and the youngest part at 165 BC (Vriezen and Van der Woude, 1989). The long genesis of the bible implies that there does not exist a coherent Old Testament ethic. When studying Old Testament economic ethics, we should therefore highlight both the differences and the main similarities between the several parts of the Old Testament. In contrast to other studies (like Wright, 1983; Meeks, 1989; Jongeneel, 1996) we follow the classification of Vriezen and Van der Wouden, 1989, and distinguish between Tora (the first five

* Johan Graafland kent Theo van de Klundert als lid van zijn promotie-commissie (in 1990) en als adviseur van het Centraal Planbureau waar Johan Graafland tot voor kort werkzaam was. Sinds hij per 1 mei 2000 als bijzonder hoogleraar Economie, Onderneming en Ethiek aan de Katholieke Universiteit Brabant werkzaam is, werkt hij samen met Theo van de Klundert in het kader van het Centrum van Wetenschap en Levensbeschouwing.

book), Prophets and Wisdom Writers. The paper concludes with some main lines of Old Testament economic ethics.

11.2 THE TORA

The Tora consists of the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). In the Jewish tradition the Tora is the most authoritative part of the bible. The other parts are considered as further elucidation of the Tora. In this section, we first look at the narratives in the Tora. Next, we consider some laws that intended to regulate the social economic life in Canaan.

11.2.1 The creation story and the fall of man

The story of the creation in Genesis 1-2 has several economic implications. First, by revealing God as the creator of heaven and earth, Genesis 1 implies that God is the ultimate owner of all created things. Although the bible esteems private property rights and actively defends them (by prohibiting stealing), every property claim by man is secondary and subject to the primary property claim of God (Stott, 1990). For ultimately, God owns it and I only hold it in trust, and he may well hold me responsible to himself for others who might have greater need of it. This thought pervades the whole bible and is basic to the idea of human stewardship (Wright, 1983).

Second, the story of the creation stresses the high value of human activity. The command of God to Adam to bring earth under his control and to cultivate the garden of Eden and to guard it, implies that labour is seen as belonging intrinsically to human life (Wright, 1983; Meeks, 1989; Jongeneel, 1996). It is part of the image of God in mankind. For God, as he is presented to us in the creation narratives, is a worker. It is thus mankind's nature, as well as his responsibility and his right, to be engaged in productive economic work.

A third important notion in Genesis 1 is that man was created as an image of God. The metaphor of the 'image of God' comes from the Near Eastern practice of the emperor putting in the hand of the ambassador a medallion with the emperor's image on it. This image was the authorization to represent the will of the emperor. Thus man is placed upon earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem (Meeks, 1989; Stott, 1990). This metaphor applies to mankind and hence to all human beings. It stresses the high value the Tora gives to human life and implies that every human has an intrinsic right on a life worthy for a human being.

A related notion in Genesis 1 concerns the importance of community. The importance of community follows from the creation of man, which expresses

God's wish to share his creation with other beings. He did not prefer to be self-sufficient. In contrast, by creating man and providing him with freedom of choice, God voluntarily restricted his own freedom and made himself dependent on man's behaviour. Also, the human is created as a social being, as man and woman, not as a single individualistic person. According to Genesis 1, the ideal life is not attained when people become more and more self-sufficient and independent of other people, but rather when they are able to satisfy their needs in community with other people.

A fifth implication of the creation story is economic growth. This can be derived from the command to become numerous. Growth in numbers requires growth in material production and provision (Wright, 1983). Note that the need of economic growth is not developed from a notion of scarcity, in contrast to economic thought. Genesis 1 notes that when God looked at everything he had made, he was very pleased. Nothing was lacking.

Another noteworthy aspect of the creation story is that it describes God as the creator of all created things (Stott, 1990). God is not only the God of religious life. Christians often imagine that God is chiefly interested in religion, religious buildings, religious activities and religious books. But Genesis 1 depicts God as being concerned to the whole of life: sex, the beauty and order of the natural world, work and leisure, friendship and all kinds of creative activity which enrich the quality of life. This implies respect for nature and all other forms of life.

The seventh aspect relates to the seventh day. According to Genesis 1, God finished his work at the seventh day. He blessed that day and set it apart as a special day, because he rested on that day. God's creative activity culminates in rest. This underlines the importance of being able to stop working and to enjoy the fruits of your work.

Genesis 3 tells that the human being refused to be steward of God and wanted to be autonomous. It is remarkable that Genesis assumes that sin invaded the world by a deed of consumption. By taking an apple from the tree that gives knowledge of good and evil, man disobeyed God and intended to become as wise as God. It is at this stage that scarcity enters the scene. Men is sent out of the garden of Eden and placed under a curse. He will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce enough food for him. As a result, labour becomes ambiguous. On the one hand, human work is still viewed as a gift of God, and there is no better alternative for a man than to find satisfaction in his work. But on the other hand, it can also be fruitless and frustrating (Meeks, 1989).

11.2.2 The patriarchs, the exodus and the settlement in Canaan

With the calling of Abraham in Chapter 12 a new episode starts in Genesis. The Tora describes the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) as wandering people with no permanent dwelling-place and no secure footholds. They are small cattle nomads, keeping sheeps and goats. In the nomadic culture, there are almost no economic differences within a clan. The whole clan is rich or poor. Even the slaves are part of the family and, hence, do not constitute a separate class.

Genesis 46 tells that during the life of the third patriarch, Jacob, a famine drives the people of Israel to Egypt. After the death of Joseph (a son of Jacob), the people of Israel became slaves. According to the exodus story, it was only after 400 years that Israel left Egypt. The exodus from Egypt described in the book Exodus is one of the most important stories in the forming history of Israel and provides an important motive in the priestly laws. This is illustrated by the decalogue which starts with the vital preface: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves' (Ex. 20:1). With the deliverance from slavery the exploitation of the weak by the powerful is rejected. Several laws in the Tora are motivated by this experience of the exodus. These are meant to preserve the political and economic equality and form a kind of 'political economy' (Meeks, 1989).

This especially applies to the laws designed for the life in Canaan. After the settlement, the property of the holy land became a central aspect of the Jewish identity (Wright, 1983). In this respect the promise of land to Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-3) is of special importance. It emphasised the fact that Israel lived in a land which had been destined for them by God (Davies, 1989). Thus, any claim that Israel had a intrinsic right to possess the land is discounted. Here the theme of God's ownership of the whole earth is explicitly linked with his relation to Israel and their land.

Another value implicit in the gift of land to Israel concerns the equality of all Israelites. According to Deuteronomy, the land was a gift of God imparted to all the people of Israel (Davies, 1989). In connection to the distribution of the land among the Israelites the Old Testament contains several laws, which reflect the Old Testament ethics very well. No member of the community was to be denied the privilege of enjoying the benefits of the land and its produce. Also those who unfortunately did not possess any land of their own. Special provisions were made for the Levite, the sojourner, the widow and the orphan, who had no landed property on their own. For example, the law of the tithe ordered that once in the three years a tenth of all produce should be given to the foreigners, orphans and widows and Levites (Deut. 14: 28; 26: 12-13). Another law that served the purpose of preventing large disparities between rich and poor is the prohibition to charge interest on the money lend

to the poor (Ex. 22: 25, Deut. 23: 19-20, Lev. 25: 35-38). The ideal society sketched by the priestly laws is a rather equalized structure of a big number of landowning families. Poverty is viewed as a great social evil that should not exist (Dt. 15:4). Nowhere in the Tora the ascetic ideal of poverty is defended.

11.2.3 The sabbatical laws

The sabbatical laws – the institution of the seventh day, the seventh year and the jubilee year after seven times seven years – were also designed to protect the poor. Exodus 23:12 explicitly commands not to work on the Sabbath 'so that your slaves and the foreigners who work for you and even your animals can rest.' The Sabbath is equalitarian; it is common to all (Meeks, 1989). It can't be purchased. Note that not only slaves and strangers, but also animals will benefit from this restriction on work time. They are also part of Gods creation and should be taken care of. The motive of the social character of the Sabbath is mentioned in Deut. 5: 13-15, where Israel is remembered that they have been slaves themselves in Egypt and that God rescued them by his power. This illustrates that the experience of slavery services as an appeal to consider the interests of the poor and the weak.

Similar principles hold for the seventh year, the sabbatical year. In the oldest version of the law of the seventh year the land should not be harvested in the sabbatical year (Ex. 23: 10-11). In addition to the ecological motive – preventing exhaustion (Jongeneel, 1986) – this command also had a social motive, since the poor were allowed to eat what grows on the land. In the deuteronomistic version of the seventh year this command does not return, however (Deut. 15: 1-11). Another protective element of the sabbatical year was the command to release the Hebrew slaves. Sometimes the poor could only survive by selling themselves as slaves. In this way the institute of slavery actually served the poor to protect them against starvation. But this situation should not endure forever. After six years the slave should be able to start again for himself. The exact conditions differ in different texts. For example, in the relatively old text of Ex. 21: 1-4 only the Hebrew male slave should be abolished. In later versions of the law of the seventh year (Deut. 15: 12-15), also the Hebrew female slave should be released (Maarsingh, 1985). Furthermore, the text in Deut. 15 adds that when the slave is set free, the master should not send him away empty-handed, but share part of his produce with him. Partly, because the slave deserved so because of his work during the six years of his slavery, and partly because the slave needed some capital in order to be able to regain an independent life. Here too, the Israelites should remember that they were slaves in Egypt and set free by the Lord.

The command to release debt-slaves is actually implied by another command in the Deuteronomistic version of the seventh year, the command to cancel the debts of the poor fellow-Israelite in the seventh year. As debt slaves had to serve in order to pay their debt, the cancelling of debts implies the release of debt slaves (De Vaux, 1989). Like the release of slaves, the cancelling of debts in the seventh year should protect the poor from ever lasting dependency from the lender.

Leviticus 25 also deals with the seventh year. In contrast to Ex. 21-23 and Deut. 25, Leviticus does not mention the release of slaves. Instead, it poses another institution, namely the jubilee year which only occurred once in the forty-nine years. The Jubilee year introduces an interesting new element: All property that has been sold shall be restored to the original owner or his descendants. This means that only the produce of land was marketable. The price of the use of a land is to be fixed according to the number of years the land can produce crops before the next jubilee year. If there are many years, the price shall be higher, but if there are only a few years left, the price shall be lower. In principal, the original owner kept the property rights. Therefore, the return of the land in the jubilee year was not a matter of charity, but a matter of justice. The theological reason for land not being sold on a permanent basis was that it belongs to God. God gave the land to the Israelites when they conquered Canaan and distributed the land among the tribes and clans. Every Israelite should be able to live from the produce of his own land (Maarsingh, 1985). The idea of personal dignity was closely related to the ability of living independently of the produce of the own land. In order to prevent a growing disparity in incomes and wealth, land should be excluded from the market mechanism. Because of the frequency of 49 years, the jubilee year implied that every generation had the possibility to start anew. If an Israelite was forced to sell his land because of bad luck, his descendants would still have the possibility to restore the wealth of their family.

11.3 THE PROPHETS

Second to the Tora follows the books of the Prophets. Since the eight century the 'early Prophets' are distinguished from the 'later Prophets'. The 'early Prophets' consist of historical books like Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Although these books contain no prophecies, they do describe the historical context of the life of the prophets. The 'later Prophets' contain the typical Old Testament prophecies, a type of literature that is rather unique for the eastern civilization.

The time of the Kings of Israel provides the historical background of the Old Testament prophets. During the reign of Solomon a second major

sociological change took place (Van Leeuwen, 1956). The rather equalized structure of landholding family clans was replaced by a more hierarchical structure, with power concentrated at the royal court. During this time, international trade was winning through. Among other things, Solomon is presented as a shipowner, albeit not directly but in conjunction with Hiram of Tyre. 1 Kings 9:28 reports that such enterprises were crowned with remarkable success: the ships brought back gold, precious stones and precious wood and curiosities like apes and peacocks. A close examination of the texts indicates, however, that Solomon was not very successful. For example, one text (1 Kings 9:13) reports that the relation between Solomon and Hiram was disrupted because Hiram considered the payment of the debts of Solomon to be inadequate (Soggin, 1993).

Together with the rise in international trade, the market economy became more important. Several texts indicate that one was aware of the working of the price mechanism. For example, 2 Kings 7:1 reports that prices were excessively high during the siege of Samaria and that they dropped sharply once the Syrian army of Benhadad left.

During the reign of Solomon the pressure of the royal court on the population increased. 1 Kings 5:13 reports that 30 thousand men were forced to labour for Solomon's buildings. In addition, 80 thousand men worked in the quarries and another 70 thousand were porters. There are parallels to this among the states in the region, but in Israel under Solomon it must have assumed abnormal and thus intolerable proportions (Soggin, 1993). The forced labour and the high taxes for the royal organization especially hit small peasants (Davies, 1989). As a result, they had little reserves to overcome tough periods because of drought or locust plagues or wars and easily slipped into poverty. Often they got locked into a spiral of making debt and selling land to repay the debt, thereby reducing their possibilities in the future. Some peasants ended with being forced to sell themselves or their children as slaves. As a result, the period of the Kings witnessed a growing inequality in the income and wealth distribution.

The high inequality in income and wealth, the impoverishment of the farmers and the loss of their inherited land properties was sharply criticized by the prophets. They protest against the large landownership, against those who 'buy more houses and fields to add to those who already have, until there will be nowhere for anyone else to live' (Is. 5: 8). Several of these prophets came from the countryside themselves, like Amos and Micah, and wanted to protect the small landowners.

Amos preached in the middle of the eight-century BC in the Northern kingdom of Israel, with Samaria as capital city. Excavations have shown that during this time the royal court inhabited large palaces in Samaria, whereas the common people had to live in slums (Van Leeuwen, 1956; De Vaux,

1989). Amos denounces poverty as an evil. In denouncing poverty, he not only refers to particular situations, but also to those who are responsible for it. Poverty is not the result of fate or blind destiny. People in misery are often the victims of the injustice of others. For example, some people are forced into slavery even if they cannot repay small debts, for the price of a pair of sandals (Am. 2: 6-8). Another example is that the rich want to become richer by demanding excessive prices for grain (Am. 8: 4-8). Amos condemns this misuse of the market mechanism. He holds the rich responsible for the misery and warns that if they do not convert, they will be taken into exile. It was only some years after Amos' prophecy that the Assyrian conquered the Northern Kingdom and sent the people into exile, where it completely vanished under the cruel hand of the Assyrian.

During the time that Amos appeared in the Northern kingdom, Isaiah and Micah prophesied against the oppression of the poor by the rich minority in Judah, the Southern kingdom of Israel (with Jerusalem as capital city). Micah also especially protested against the large landholders who take the fields and the houses of others (Mi. 2: 2). They live a decadent life in the cities, while letting tenants (of which most were previously impoverished small landowners) farm their land and using the poor as cheap labour inputs to build their cities (Mi. 3: 10). It is treachery of the ideal that 'each lives in peace among his own vineyards and figtrees' (Mi. 4: 4). He also condemns fraud in trade (Mi. 6: 11) and the bribery of judges by the rich people (Mi. 3: 11), which took away the final defence of the poor against the rich. As we can learn from later prophets like Zephaniah and (two centuries later) Jeremiah, this situation was highly persistent, ending in the judgement of Judah being sent into exile to Babylon. Even during and after the exile to Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel and Zechariah, respectively, protested against the social abuses.

11.4 THE WISDOM WRITERS

The writings consist of several types of books, ranging from historical books like Chronicles to poetic books like Song of Songs. For our purpose, we are especially interested in the Wisdom Writers, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, because they relatively contain a lot of texts with an economic aspect. For the (orthodox) Jew, writings have less authority than the Tora and the Prophets. The oldest parts of these books were written in the early sixth century BC, the latest parts came into being in the Hellenistic period. Generally, it is assumed that the Wisdom Writers belonged to the upper classes of society. For Ecclesiastes the validity of this assumption is evident, but for Proverbs there is at present very little unanimity among scholars about the social world of its authors (Whybray, 1989).

The background of the Wisdom Writers expresses itself in their view on poverty and wealth. In contrast to the Tora and the Prophets, the Wisdom Writers are less inclined to defend the poor. For example, they advise not to give bail for a stranger, because of the great risks involved if the debtor will not pay for his debt (Pr. 11: 15). This might ruin the household of the one who gives bail. Nevertheless, the Wisdom Writers follow the Tora in subscribing the prohibition of interest (Pr. 28:8). This is remarkable in the light of their cold and cautious attitude with respect to helping the poor people.

As for the causes of poverty, the Wisdom Writers also have a different opinion. Whereas the Prophets argue that the poor are involuntarily driven in poverty by the unjust structures maintained by the rich, the Wisdom Writers point at immoral lifestyles, like adultery and prostitution (Pr. 5: 10; 29:3), self-conceit, in the sense that one does not take advice from others (Pr. 13: 18; 12:11), and laziness of individual people as causes for impoverishment (De Santa Ana, 1977). That poverty is the result of laziness, is a theme that regularly comes back in the Wisdom literature (Pr. 6: 6-11; 10: 4; 20: 4-13). Although this view may have had some realism in the context of the peasantry in the countryside, it probably also illustrates that the Wisdom Writers have never experienced poverty themselves. They rarely consider that poverty might also be caused by the unjust economic structures, like the prophets did. Only in the book Job (Job 24: 2-14) we find texts that point at the rich and their unjust actions against the poor.

Incidentally, the Wisdom Writers also picture an inverse relationship, in the sense that poverty can cause immoral behaviour. In particular, poverty can stimulate people to steal from other people (Pr. 30: 8). This idea is unique for the Old Testament and is present neither in the Tora nor the Prophets. Rather, this idea expresses the old Greek thought, that poverty seduces to all kinds of crimes.

On the other hand, the wisdom writers also confirm the dignity of the poor man in relation to the creator. Examples are Proverbs 17:5 (If you laugh at poor people, you insult the God who made them) and 19:17 (When you give to the poor, it is like lending to the Lord). Also the poor man is made like God and should be treated with esteem (Stott, 1990). The people's attitude to God should be reflected in their attitudes to the poor. The neglect of the needs of the poor is condemned as a sin (Pr. 21: 13). Greedy traders who hoard grain, waiting for a higher price, are also cursed (Pr. 11: 26), because they want to become rich at the expense of other people.

Like the Tora and the Prophets, the Wisdom Writers do not idealize poverty. They acknowledge the great material and social misery that poverty creates. A poor man does not receive any respect and no one pays any attention to what he says or thinks (Eccl. 9: 16). The poor man is even

despised by his own friends and family (Pr. 14: 20). For that reason, Ecclesiastes thinks that the dead are better off than the poor who are still alive (Van Leeuwen, 1956).

Whereas laziness could easily cause poverty, wealth is viewed by the Wisdom Writers as the reward of an active and virtuous life (Pr. 13: 16; 22: 4). Entrepreneurship is positively valued. Ecclesiastes advises to invest money in foreign trade in order to make profits. In order to minimize the risk, he calls for investments in several places, because you never know what kind of bad luck you are going to have (Eccl. 11: 1-6). On the other hand, the Wisdom Writers are also aware that hard working and wealth do not guarantee a happy life (Eccl. 9: 11). It is a gift of God when people are really able to enjoy life and the fruits of labour (Eccl. 5: 18; 6: 2). Moreover, they value a life with the sole purpose of getting richer as foolish (Eccl. 5: 9). Excessive effort to increase wealth reduces the joy in life. There must be a balance between working and resting and consuming the fruits of one's work (Eccl. 4: 6). A third qualification of the value of richness is that it potentially corrupts the rich man and materializes his life. Richness may induce a misplaced feeling of haughtiness, which endangers the relationship with God and the fellow human beings (Pr. 30: 9; 18: 23). The Wisdom Writers value wealth less than respect for God.

11.5 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN BIBLICAL ECONOMIC ETHICS

Comparing the economic ethics of the several parts in the Old Testament, we both find similarities and differences. The key notions that we find throughout the Old Testament are fivefold.

The first notion is that all things belong to God, because he is the creator of heaven and earth. This motive is reinforced by the motive of the liberation of Israel from Egypt. Both as creator and as redeemer of man God has a moral right that mankind shape his economic behaviour and institutions in accordance with Gods intentions. This is expressed by the metaphor of the stewardship of man. A steward manages the household of the lord and is accountable for the way he uses the lord's property.

The second notion is the calling of man to labour, to bring earth under control and to cultivate and guard it. In this aspect, man is an image of God who has created heaven and earth and still labours to maintain his creation. Labour belongs intrinsically to the human life. Especially in the writings labour is appreciated as a means to gain material wealth.

A third key notion is the principal equality of human beings. Mankind is created as an image of God. This implies that the life of every human being should be respected. The economic ideal of the Old Testament is that every

person should be able to built up a human life. The right of the poor and the weak to life is primary to the right of the rich to accumulate their private property. This is the essence of many laws described in the Tora, like the sabbatical year and the jubilee year, and the heart of the prophetic protests in the time of the kings. Also the writings base the human solidarity on the idea that all people are images of God and that oppressing poor persons is equal to insulting God who made them.

A fourth key notion is the goodness of the creation. God highly valued the world he created. The Old Testament does not reject economic growth nor favours an ascetic life.

However, the Old Testament also places restrictions on the economy. Not everything should be subjected to the chains of production and consumption. The creation of God has an intrinsic value, separably from the value human attach to the creation for their own lifehood. This implies respect for nature and all other forms of life. The creation should not be exhausted. Both man, animal and land should be given rest in order to restore from the effort of labour. Especially the seventh day (in case of land, the seventh year) is set apart for this purpose.

A final key notion is the troubled nature of the real life. The biblical ethic formulates rules how men should behave, not how they actually behave. The large discrepance between ethic rules and actual behaviour is regarded as an expression of the fall of men. Human life is infected by sin. Self-centeredness has become a dominant motive. Instead of loving God above all and the neighbour as himself, man strives at maximizing his own interests. As a result, the economic life is not able to produce the happiness intended by God.

Notwithstanding these similarities, there are also differences in accents between the various Old Testament traditions. In particular, whereas the prophets strongly criticized the riches for oppressing the poor, the wisdom writers generally had a positive attitude towards the rich and were more critical about the poor.

REFERENCES

Bovenberg, A.L. and Th.C.M.J. van de Klundert (1999), Christelijke traditie en neo-klassieke economie in gesprek, *Economisch Statistische Berichten*, 848-52.

Davies, E.W. (1989), Lands; its rights and privileges, in: R.E. Clements (ed.), *The world of ancient Israel: sociological, anthropological and political perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, 349-70.

Jongeneel, R.A. (1996), *Economie van de barmhartigheid, een christelijk-normatieve visie op de economie*, Kok, Kampen.

Leeuwen, C. van (1956), *Sociaal besef in Israël*, Bosch en Keuning, Baarn.
Maarsingh, B. (1985), *Maatschappijcritiek in het Oude Testament, het jubeljaar*, Kok, Kampen.
Meeks, M.D. (1989), *God and the economist: the doctrine of God and political economy*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.
Santa Ana, J. de (1977), *Good news to the poor: The challenge of the poor in the history of the church*, World Councel of Churches, Geneva.
Soggin, J.A. (1993), *An introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, SCM Press LTD.
Stott, J. (1990), *Issues facing christians today*, Marshall Morgan and Scott, Londen.
Vaux, R. de (1989), *Hoe het oude Israel leefde*, deel I, vijfde druk, Boekencentrum, Den Haag.
Vriezen, Th. C. and A.S. van der Woude (1989), *Literatuur van Oud-Israël*, Servire, Katwijk aan zee.
Whybray, R.N., (1989), The social world of the wisdom writers, in: R.E. Clements (ed.), *The world of ancient Israel: sociological, anthropological and political perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, 227-250.
Wright, C.J.H. (1983), *Living as the people of God, the relevance of Old Testament Ethics*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester.